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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BASRAH SECURITY ATMOSPHERICS

REF: (A) BASRAH 54; (B) BASRAH 43; (C) BASRAH 49; (D) BASRAH 63; (E) BASRAH 73

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REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The recent uptick of violence in Basrah is directly attributable to the endemic political corruption and use of militia forces for criminal purposes. Killings of Sunni citizens have increased at an alarming rate, but the organized bloodshed knows no community boundaries. Governor Muhammad and his brother Ismail, along with Jaysh al-Mahdi and the Fadillah militia, share responsibility for most of the violence. The way to break the spiral of violence is for coalition forces to launch a sustained effort to detain them and bring them to justice. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The city of Basrah, the nerve center in the south for Shia militias, has experienced an alarming increase in assassinations and violence since the bombing of the Samarra mosque on February 22. Though the violence is widespread across every community, much of it is directed against the Sunni minority (see Ref A for recent background). Militia members, either acting under orders or on their own, are the likely perpetrators and have taken advantage of the lax security atmosphere and their infiltration of the police to carry out the attacks. The most recent killings of Sunnis included two Al Zubair council members, Sheik Khalid Abdullah Jarad al-Saadon and Tarik Ali Sultan, on May 10 and Sheik Khalil Jaber Abdul Ali and his son on May 12. Sheik Khalil was killed in front of his mosque, Al Khudain, in Basrah city. See septel for a report on a Regional Embassy Office (REO) May 14 meeting with Sunni leaders in Basrah.

¶3. (C) But no segment of society is immune from the violence, and much of the responsibility is laid upon Governor Muhammad al-Wa'eli (see Ref B), and his brother, Ismail (see Ref C). Numerous contacts place the blame directly on the brothers, accusing them of using Fadillah's informal militia in the police and the Oil Protection Force (see Ref D) to target political and business opponents. Indirect guilt is also ascribed to the Governor for his lackluster efforts to control the rampant violence in Basrah, and the Basrah Provincial Council has proven its only expertise lies in proclaiming boycotts rather than instituting reforms in the police force (see Ref D for background on the Basrah police). No local officials have proposed or are taking any actions that would curb the violence.

¶4. (C) Militias, particularly Jaysh al-Mahdi and Fadillah's, appear to be responsible for the majority of the violence. The inability to rely on local security forces (the Basrah police, or persons wearing police uniforms, routinely are fingered as the culprits in most kidnappings and murders) has a stultifying effect on every aspect of society in Basrah. A snapshot of the last week's events related to the security of the Basrah REO and its personnel provides a microcosm of the wide range of threats

and attacks that occur on a regular basis (see Ref E).

15. (C) The only action that can constrain the institutionalized violence in Basrah is more robust action by MND-SE and coalition forces against the corrupt government and the militia forces behind most of the violence. REO Basrah recommends that MND-SE act directly - when it has good evidence - against local officials, including the Governor, even though there may be short-term political consequences. The general public would applaud such efforts to remove the major criminal elements. Local militias, particularly JAM and Fadillah's, exercise too much power on Basrah's streets and appear invulnerable to the average citizen. If a concerted effort is not made to root out corrupt officials and rein in the militia forces, the future of Basrah - with all its economic potential - will be irredeemable.

MARRANO